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SHINING
FIELDS
and
DARK
TOWERS
by
JOHN
BUNKER





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SHINING FIELDS AND
DARK TOWERS

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AND
DARK TOWERS

BY
JOHN BUNKER
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TO
MY FATHER

*Here are blind words
And a broken sound,
A drift of smoke
And barren ground.*

*But you will give them sight
And music's power;
For you the smoke will flame
And this mould flower.*

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SHINING FIELDS AND
DARK TOWERS

SHINING FIELDS AND DARK TOWERS

Earth-Music

Oh, when into the fields I walk
While yet the day is shining clear,
Familiar sights of joy I see
And even happier music hear.

Oh, then between the lovely noise
Of the green and pleasant hill
And the valleys spreading wide
In a chorus loud and shrill,

And the buds' tumultuous shout
And the sunlight's thrilling tones

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

And the clamor of the grass

And the outcry of the stones—

Between all these I scarce can hear

The utterance of my rhythmic blood,

And the beat of Time itself

Is lost in Nature's lyric flood.

But when at night walking abroad

On no familiar sight I come,

Then I can hear Time's powerful beat

And my blood cry, no longer dumb.

The Flute-Player

Here on the top o' the windy hill
I'll sit and pipe at my sweet will—
Starry hymns or human strains,
Natural joys or mystic pains,
Rollicking tunes or simple airs,
Just as my own spirit stirs.

Warm odors, leaping colors, nashes of sound
Encompass my senses around:
Wide-wavering fumes from heavy-headed
 flowers,
Strong cadence of flood waters, mighty
 powers
Of the untrammeled air, the bright

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Delirious magnificence of light.

Unfurled

Lie the glory and the loveliness of the world,

The grandeur and the mystery and the might:

The palpitant, soft-breathing earth

Lazily outstretched in careless beauty,

Gorgeous shows o' the sky

Shot with multitudinous splendors,

Tremendous music

Surging through all creation

As if it would crack the mould of things!

.

And I with a silly pipe, a useless reed,

Sit silent now at my extremest need.

Here on the top o' the windy hill

I sit alone and still.

Down the shrunk sky the day is ebbing fast.

And now comes creeping

The Flute-Player

With stealthy, imperceptible approach the filmy
twilight;

Onward it sweeps

Billowing mistily up from the valley

And closes over me—

Cool and soft and vague.

I feel about me secret presences,

Frail witcheries, subtle influences;

Shy wistful hues peeping from shadowy
places,

Little grey winds skipping among the grasses.

Slender, invisible fingers stray over me

Delicately, tremulously,

And I in sensitive response

Half-consciously breathe into my pipe.

Then at last rises my song,

Swelling forth under the faint stars.

Gracefully my song advances

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Like a maiden dancer,
Gracefully it advances under the stars,
Running with silver feet lightly over the sod.
Swiftly, swiftly it dances onward,
Waking the woods as it goes with musical
 laughter,
Down the slope hill toward the hid horizon,
Till suddenly, far off, in the dusk,
It vanishes,
Leaving me Night and this hush upon the air.

.

Am I the flute or the flute-player?

The Whistling Boy

(Spring Song)

I could hear him coming toward me, for the
sound was very clear,

And when I turned a sudden bend I saw that
he was near—

A whistling boy, a country boy, upon a country
road,

With rounded cheeks and pursèd lips from which
the music flowed,

A country boy with gladness and a tirra-lirra
lay,

And oh, but it was pleasant to hear, and oh,
but it was gay!

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

The morning mists were rising soft, and
vaguely could be seen
Upon the damp and smoking fields the slender
shoots of green
And in the corner by the fence the sheep that
huddled lay
Together in a fleecy group to wait the coming
day;
But the boy did not look at them as he went
slowly by
With his tirra-lirra music and a grave and sober
eye.

And then the sun shone brightly forth and
startled into song
Full four-and-twenty little birds that had been
silent long,
And the mists blew from the meadows, and all
the silly lambs

The Whistling Boy

Rose stiff-leggèd and bleating beside their feed-
ing dams.

But the boy passed slowly by me and he said
never a word;

His hair was white like the fleece of a lamb,
and his song like a bird.

I turned and watched him as he went along the
road alone;

A rabbit scurried over his path; he stooped and
threw a stone;

But for all the sounds that he might hear or
sights that he might see,

Oh, never a moment did he pause in his blithe
minstrelsy,

But high and higher rose his tune till all the
air did ring,

For his body it was the body of Youth and his
soul the soul of Spring.

Twilight

Softly as tremulous dreams
The dusk comes floating by,
Like visible music of streams
And mist and air and sky.

The shadows waver and go
Rippling over the grass,
Like musical waters that flow,
Like musical winds that pass.

And yet there is no sound
Within the hollow air,
Only a peace profound
And silence exceeding fair.

Twilight

Like a silver strain

Silence and dusk float by,
Soothing as sleep after pain,
Wistful as dreams that die.

Nocturne

Beside a little stream of silvery white
One calm midsummer eve I paused to gaze,
Watching the spirits of heaven softly raise
Their trembling beacons of o'er-brimming light;
Swiftly my soul did mount to charmed height
And earth-oblivious in that starry haze
Thrilled to its inmost with a sharp amaze
At the supernal majesty of Night.

In power serene lay bare the glittering sky,
And as I viewed that wide-encircling zone
Of ancient awe, unfathomed mystery,
And visible splendors of a realm unknown,
Lo, on the marge of dim Eternity
One tranced moment mute I stood—alone.

Angels

I walked up to the gate
And it swung open wide;
I heard a joyful sound
And softly stepped inside.

It was a field of green;
Many children were there
Running up and down
With laughter and blown hair.

It was a sky of peace;
Tall angels stood around
Watching the children at play
Upon that pleasant ground.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

I seemed to know the field,
I seemed to know the sky,
But the little children I did not know
Nor the angels who stood by.

Little children at play,
With eyes shining bright,
Their laughter merry to hear,
Their garments snowy white—

At whiles I saw them pause
One by one and go
Each to his proper angel,
And they each other know.

One by one they went
Each to his angel's side;
The angels caught them up
And spread their pinions wide;

Angels

They spread their pinions wide
And flew into the air;
I saw it with great wonder,
It was a sight so fair.

Little children of God,
I saw them borne away
To fields not always green,
To skies sometimes grey.

I passed once more the gate
And it swung firmly to;
I walked until I came
Unto the place I knew,

And there I saw the angels
Still guarding each his own,
And in a world of loneliness
No person walked alone.

To Harsh Judgment Thinking Itself Wisdom

So that was he whom you despise
Just passed before our casual eyes,
The broken wretch your scorn doth seek
As one scorn-worthy, being weak.
And was he weak, or was he strong
And gave he battle, hard and long.
Oh, looking so with alien stare
How may we judge and how declare
What massèd files from nether Hell
He withstood before he fell?
What may we guess, what may we say
Of that sharp and deadly fray
When his soul in grievous fight

Judgment Thinking Itself Wisdom

Closed with Evil in the night
Face to face and hand to hand
All in a strange and lonely land?
Oh, that fierce assault, the stark
And savage struggle in the dark,
When the lights of heaven grew cold
And the stormy darkness rolled
Over land and over sea
In a cloak of mystery.
Assault, repulse, assault again,
Oh, the never-easing strain,
Leaden moments of scant breath,
And the reeling ground beneath,
Till out-wearied with grim play
At last he faltered and gave way,
And while th' obscene and impious rout
Raised a wild, triumphant shout,
There amid the loathly din
He fell before the hosts of sin.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Oh, looking now with alien eyes
What may we say and what surmise?
Of that grim battle, blow for blow,
What do we know, what do we know?

Sonnet to a Boy

Thou frank brave eye which on the world doth
stare

With high observance and bold unconcern,
Lord of the hour, king without a care,
Monarch in trust for whom the great stars
burn;

When traitorous Time, proud rebel to command,
Shall shake thy throne with treason, disavow
His past allegiance and with hasty hand
Pluck the bright circlet from thy 'customed
brow;

When all thy golden trappings of romance
Shall vanish away as if they had not been
And thou, a bond-slave to strict circumstance,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Shalt noteless walk 'mid crowds of servile
men,—

Oh, then, remember this,—though in disguise,
A king is e'er a king in Heaven's eyes.

Adventure

A shadowy sense of some stark danger near,
A strange far region where no path is shown,
And round my heart the play and ripple of fear:
Now to strike boldly forth to the unknown!

On Bidding Farewell to
a Poet Gone to
the Wars

You didn't pose, self-conscious of your lot,
Nor speak of what might be or might have
been;

You always thought heroics simply rot,
And so you merely wore your old-time grin.

Whether you had a vision in your eyes
Or bore a splendid dream within your heart,
I couldn't tell; such things come with surprise
And cannot be forecast by any art.

Of those high secrets I can say no word
Nor why on this grim business you were
bent;

Farewell to a Poet Gone to the Wars

What dreams, what visions in your bosom
stirred

Will doubtless be made clear by the event.

I know but this, that 'mid the manifold din

Of breaking camp we said goodbye, we two,

And you looked at me with your old-time
grin,—

And this is all I can report of you.

On a Late Battle in Europe

"Oh human heart, be still;
See not, oh human eyes;
Sorrow will have her fill
And Death his sacrifice."

Not so! our eyes shall clear
With euphrasy of Sorrow;
Our hearts not Death shall fear
Who leads to God's great morrow.

The Splendid Stranger

He came, the Splendid Stranger, with surprise
And walked among us for a certain while,
And there was magic in his glowing eyes
And there was healing in his slow, shrewd
smile.

Oh, there were some who did not view aright
Such things as mirth and laughter till he
came,

But he was patient with their meagre sight
And flasht on darkness his revealing flame.

But laughter has its brief and passing season
And there's an end, it seems, of mirth and
play,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

And we are wise with sharp and sudden reason,
And he is over the hills and far away.

Yet though another quest he follows after
We shall not mourn in this dim light and
wan,
For through the dark there blows immortal
laughter
And mirthful music from the fields of dawn.

Revelation

*"For an enduring heart have the destinies
appointed to the children of men."—Iliad.*

I walked into the streets
 Comfort to find,
But I could not find comfort
 Nor faces kind.

In hurrying throngs
 The people streamed by;
Their iron clangor
 Went up to the sky,

And I most weary
 Walked alone
'Mid hearts of lead
 And faces of stone.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Then as I paused
With senses sick
I heard the sound
Of a tapping stick

And turning saw
In those thronged ways
A blind youth walking
With careful pace;

A blind youth walking
With careful pace
And a strange calmness
Upon his face.

He stopped at the curb
To wait a guide;
I led him across
Through the traffic's tide. . . .

Revelation

Then the earth heaved,
Light fell in showers;
The air grew sweet
With springing flowers,

And all the people
There in sight
Suddenly moved
In dazzling light.

Yea, then I heard
With ravished ear
The hosts of glory
Chanting clear

A burning hymn
Of love and praise
That set the heavens
In a blaze:

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

"Genius of man,
This be your token,
Fronting the years
Unconquered, unbroken,

"In granite patience
And noble trust,
Invincible spirit,
Masterful dust!"—

A thunderous hymn
Like fire that rolled
And made the heavens
A blaze of gold

And shook the air
And solid ground
With singing light,
With flaming sound,

Revelation

Till sky and air
And earthly mire
Dissolvèd were
In golden fire;

So that with what
I heard and saw
I scarce could get
My breath for awe,

But dumb and staring
There did stand
Holding a blind youth
By the hand.

New York Sketches

I—PALM SUNDAY IN CENTRAL PARK

To-day was a holiday with me
And I went forth to the Park
To see what I could see,—
And it was extremely delightful!
There was of course the balmy air of a Spring
 day
And the slender shoots of green just appearing
And the birds hopping about
And squirrels running hither and yon . . .
And people.
It was the last really I wanted to see,
And so I sat down on a bench and watched
 them.

New York Sketches

And they came and they came and they came
And passed by,—

And they all seemed in remarkably good humor:

Young girls in groups of two or three or four

Chatting merrily,

Strolling couples,

Husband and wife,

Young lovers, . . .

And babies!

My gracious, there was just a stream of *them*!

With their round staring eyes

And their snubby little noses

And their chubby fists which they sucked most
industriously.

There was a man on the bench with me,

Poorly dressed,

With a rather dull and unintelligent face.

And yet

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

He was reading a volume of Keats. . . .
Perhaps he was a great genius;
Who knows?
Socrates was no beauty.

Nearby sat a middle-aged Jewish woman,
Fat and straggly-haired and slovenly and
gross;
And around her several children were playing.
And whenever she looked at them,
Which was often,
Especially at one,
A boy of seven or eight with coal-black eyes
And rosy cheeks,
The look in her eye became very tender.
There was a smear of dirt on her cheek
Made by some grimy and innocent little paw,
But she did not seem to mind it
And no doubt considered it a badge of honor

New York Sketches

And a mark of sublime and ineffable distinction.
Her smile was exceedingly patient and gentle;
And presently as I sat looking at her
I found myself
Spiritually bowing down before her
In most profound and admiring reverence.

And then the horses,
And the carriages,
And the automobiles!
What a gay and debonair appearance they made
As they flashed by,
With their caparisoned drivers
Or brown-habited chauffeurs with jaunty caps.
And in one of the automobiles sat a young
woman

With a straight narrow nose
And a short upper lip
And small hands with tapering fingers,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

So that I thought perhaps she was an aristocrat.
Actually her father may have been a grocer
Or a plumber

In Pittsburgh or Newport, Kentucky.

But whatever she was,

My, but she was beautiful!—

Enough to draw the heart right out of one's
bosom.

And she was laughing—

I could see the white flash of her teeth in the
sunlight;

And her eyes were extremely dark,

And her hair.

And she seemed to be in the most jolly humor
imaginable;

For after all the rich may be happy;

At least, so says Marcus Aurelius—

If they are virtuous.

At any rate she swept by in her car;

New York Sketches

And after that the sun seemed to shine more
 brightly
And the birds twittered with a gayer note
And even the squirrels seemed friskier than
 before.

And still the people went by . . .
Young girls in a row stepping briskly together,
Old men walking slowly,
Youthful couples with dreams in their eyes,
And babies!
Some in go-carts
Or in their mothers' arms
Or toddling on the sidewalk
Holding to the one finger of parent or guardian
Which was all they were able to compass,—
And always sucking their fists.
My, but they have prodigious appetites!

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

II—THE CABARET

Let us go to the cabaret this evening.
Really it's a funny place
And worth visiting
Once,
Or perhaps twice;
And it will give you something to wonder at
And tell about "back home."
Oh no, not wicked—
Just dull. . . .
Here we are!
In these places, you know,
They have some queer customs.
For one thing you have to keep a firm hand
On your food and drink
For fear the waiters may whisk them from you,
The idea of course being
To have you order more food and drink,

New York Sketches

And as a matter of fact
You always do end up
By drinking drinks you don't want
And eating food for which you have no
appetite.

However, you do all this
In order to look on
At what is termed "the entertainment."
It is about to start.

.

"That woman performer there now,
With spangles,
Just about to sing,
Or dance,
Or what-not—
Is she not a woman of loose character,
What they call 'a painted lady'?"
Why, no; I do not think so.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

She cannot afford to carouse
Or be "fast,"
For she has to be in condition for her work,
Which is quite exacting.
This is her "job,"
And she knows if she is to hold it
She has to be fit and capable.
And really the chances are
That she is supporting some widowed mother
Or a broken-down father,
Or sending a brother perhaps through college.

And that young man over there, that singer;
Note him—with his clear-cut face and honest
eyes.

He has a remarkable voice.
He has been studying abroad,
But the War forced him home;
He just arrived last week.

New York Sketches

His ambition is to be an operatic singer,
But he did not complete his studies,
And so he has turned to this, for awhile.

There's our lady friend performing now.
Watch her leap in the air
And rattle her spangles
And twist about into most peculiar and unnat-
ural attitudes.
And is she trying to sing?
No one knows.
She is making some sort of sound,
But it is not music.
And her face—
Did you ever see such a smile on a human
countenance?
It turns one half-sick, doesn't it?
Really,
In spite of the broken-down father

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Or widowed mother,
One could wish she had found some other occupation
More simple and natural and womanly—
A waitress, perhaps, or a sempstress,
Or a nurse, or a saleswoman,
Or something else that has a smack of salvation
to it;
For after all
It really doesn't matter how lowly one's station
in life
Or obscure the position—
It's funny, isn't it, how one grows philosophical
In a place like this,
And exceedingly moral?—
But really, you know,
It isn't what one *does* that counts,
But what one *is*.

New York Sketches

And the young opera-singer;
Look, he is about to begin,—
With his frank gaze and manly bearing.
He, too, one could wish had found some other
way.

There he is, don't you see?
A little to one side—just below the stand;
He is facing in this direction.
His eyes have a thoughtful look;
Perhaps he is thinking of his ambitions,
Or his broken plans,
Or his future.
Or maybe he is only wondering
Why *we* are here.

III—THE BOARDING-HOUSE KEEPER

My landlady is quite old—
Over eighty, she tells me,
But you would never guess it;

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

She looks about sixty,
Or, at the most, sixty-five.
Of course she has had her troubles,—
Even now;
And at times I hear her rowing with the
servant,
A Jamaica negress;
But as a rule she is quiet and sedate and
uncomplaining.

Of an evening, sometimes, I go in and talk with
her
And make all sorts of remarks
In that lackadaisical manner of mine. . . .
I inquire if that were she I heard dancing the
other night
And making such a racket.
Or I say that, now the War is on,
I suppose she will volunteer for a nurse,

New York Sketches

Or something of the kind. . . .
And the tired look goes out of her eyes,
And her cheeks take on a rosy glow,
And she laughs delightedly,—
Really it is most agreeable to hear. . . .
I think sometime I shall suddenly kiss her
Just to see her lose thirty or forty years
And become a young woman again.

IV—THE SERVANT

She is very brown,
Almost black,
And has a child-like voice and manner
And a melodious laugh—
It's worth much just to hear her chuckle
When she is amused—
And big soft eyes.
Her years, I should judge, are twenty,
And she comes from Jamaica.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

I like to get her talking about her country. . . .

The tropics,

And the bright sun,

And the waving palm-trees.

Indeed it was the palms which started our
conversation.

I had come home from church with some palm-
leaves

And given her a piece or two.

And my, but her eyes sparkled

And glowed

And danced!

And she became quite voluble—

Telling me what a great day Palm Sun-
day is

In Jamaica,

And how they all turn out in procession,

The women in their brightest apparel,

And the men, too, in gala attire,

New York Sketches

Following the vestmented priest through the
town

Singing

And waving palm branches

In honor of Christ's entry into Jerusalem.

My, it is a wonderful fete day!

And when she had ceased and I left her,

Really it was some minutes

Before I found myself back in my own country.

V—THE RESTAURANT

I take my meals "out,"

In a little place around the corner.

It is very neat and clean

And owned by a Jew,

Who walks up and down

And has a humorous twinkle in his eye.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

He laughs and jokes with the waitresses
And they with him.
It was that last I particularly noted;
He does not treat them as "help" at all,
But somewhat after the fashion of human
beings,
And they appear to enjoy working for him. . . .
As I say, the place is run by a Jew.
And frankly
This prejudice against the Jews I don't under-
stand in the least,
Or, for the matter of that, any general and
wholesale prejudice
Which condemns off-hand and *en masse*
Races, creeds, or nations;—
Or, on the other hand, wholesale approval.
On the contrary it seems to settle down with me
Into a matter of individuals,
And if they hit it off well with me,

New York Sketches

Why, I like 'em

Whether they be white, black, yellow, or brown;

If not, not. . . .

And as for the Jews,

Well, after all, Christ was a Jew,

And Mary, His mother.

To An Old Briar

Trusty friend and true, time-tested,
Wreathed with peace and silence-crested,
Still from my wonted grasp unwrested
 In stedfast constancy,
What's the secret of thy charming?
Whence the fancies round thee swarming?
Why the fond and genial warming
 Of my heart to thee?

When my soul with sadness cleaving
At the pang of joyance leaving
Turns unto the airy weaving
 Of thine ebon bowl,
What blithe Spirit, Presence jolly,

To An Old Briar

Foeman sworn to melancholy,
Lifts me from my drooping folly
In the slough of dole?

Sorrow's feature who but knoweth?
For decay the flower bloweth,
And each fated creature soweth

Wide his crop of rue.
What then boots Love's wild endeavor?
Heavy-thoughted sage knows never
When impartial death shall sever
Plighted hearts and true.

Then when 'spite of courage vaunted
Oft my fearful heart is daunted
And I walk a pathway haunted
By the brood of care,
Then, 'tis then, when woe seems double,
At thy touch each anxious trouble

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Melts away like frailest bubble
Into viewless air.

In thy hazes softly blending
There is solace earth-transcending
As down vistaed vapors wending
In cathedral mood
Pace I slow the galleries hoary
With the mists of ancient glory,
Living o'er old scenes of story
In pensive solitude.

Though castle wall and cottage humble
Alike to kindred dust shall crumble
And earth's massy structures tumble
To destinate decay,
Heedless of Time's wreckful powers,
Still shall stand thy dream-built towers,
Still thy fancy-laden bowers
To the latest day.

Tin Symphony

There was a time
When I looked askance on all *vers-librists*,
Classing them as charlatans and shameless self-
advertisers,
Tin-symphonists,
Fellows who rattled the pans in the kitchen of
life
And banged the pots about
With an infernal clatter
Merely to attract the attention of the master of
the house
Sitting sleek and well-fed
And obviously satisfied with himself
Reading the newspaper in the parlor,—
A sort of below-stairs ruse

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

To get him to put in his head at the kitchen door
For but a moment
When bang! they would come down on that
solid sconce of his
With a handy skillet
And thus show him in the only way he could understand
That there were other things in life
Besides eating and sleeping
And the daily putting on and off of clothes
And above all
Prove to him with one well-directed stroke
That, though *he* was not troubled that way,
There are some feelings in the human breast
That cannot be adequately set forth
In the market-reports or the financial column.

So at one time I thought
In aloof condemnation,

Tin Symphony

But now I say to myself:

Well, though the instrument is not overly subtle

Nor a thing of beauty

And does not, perhaps, in its swift descent

Describe an artistic parabola,

Still, if the wielders thereof

Can make an impression on *that* skull—

Strength to their arm!

Ballade of Faces Fair

Ye faces of sweet peril drifting by
Like buoyant blossoms that in summer's day
Float on cool woodland streams confusedly,
With richest odors trailing their gone way
Though none be near to mark their passage gay:
Now by this fragrance warming yet the air
God give you love who made you passing fair!

The city streets are like a wretched sty;
The city's touch is gloom by yea and nay!
Yet when, ye sprites fresh from your native sky,
Ye but appear, in shadowy haunts and grey
Your gracious presence maketh starry play:
Now by this radiance flashing everywhere
God give you love who made you passing fair!

Ballade of Faces Fair

Though Beauty's flower flourish but to die
And none have force Time's spoiling hand to
stay,

Though Youth shall come in the false dust to lie
A sometime glorious victim to decay,
You would I bless, sweet nymphs, while yet I
may:

Now by this dawn-light on your glimmering
hair

God give you love who made you passing fair!

L'Envoi:

Ladies, for you to the far heavens I cry,
Maidens, for you I cannot choose but pray;
A simple bedesman I one topic ply,
A stedfast suitor I one boon survey,
Content no other lore to know or say
Save this alone, the burden of my prayer:
God give you love who made you passing fair!

Boons

Two men there were in the city
And one was rich in store,
But the other knew dire hunger
And poverty full sore.

And the two they pray to Heaven
And the rich man prayeth so:
"Tomorrow, Lord, is Christmas
And all honor will I show.

"My door it shall be open
And my table shall be free
To all the wretched city
For Christ's nativity."

Boons

But the other wondrous poor he was
And he could only say,
"Tomorrow, Lord, I praise Thee
Upon Christ's natal day."

And the rich man at his table
The starving city fed,
And the other to a sparrow
Gave some paltry crumbs of bread;

And one of his good bounty
To a thousand freely gave,
And one of his sweet pity
Did a tiny songster save.

Now let there be the sound of mirth
And joyful carolling
And let the merry bells ring out
For Christ, our Infant King;

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

For He did crow and clap His hands

All on His mother's knee

When that He saw those bonny gifts

For His nativity.

To a Butterfly

Let me watch thee, little swimmer
Of the air, till dim and dimmer
Grow mine eyes with thy quick motion
In thy zephyr-billowy ocean;
Fluttering here, then yonder dashing,
In the sunlight sudden flashing
Into quivering beauty golden
Soft as buds by night-winds folden;
Darting, pausing, wheeling, turning
In and out and swiftly spurning
All that is not light and airy
Like thyself, thou sprite of Færy.

Circling low or winging over
Daisied lawns and meads of clover,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Where the latest berries quicken,
Where the greenest grass doth thicken,
Where the sweet flower bloweth,
Ever on and on thou goeth,
Seeming in thy tireless flight
A wingèd spark of dancing light.

Then let me watch thee, little swimmer
Of the air, for dim and dimmer
Grow mine eyes with gathering sorrow
When I think thou hast no morrow;
Thus I'm taught of thee and fate
Fairest things have shortest date.

The Fortunate Isles

. . . and then I thought the seas
Of rime and old romance and fabled lore
Before me rolled in swift and steady motion,
And I, a youthful mariner once more,
Put out my bark upon that mighty ocean.

Yea, once again a hero of emprise
On high adventure bound and glorious quest
I spread my sail beneath young laughing skies
And steered right onward for the magic West.

On stately cities of the past I gazed
And argosies deep-freighted leaped aboard,
The shores of golden realms of fancy grazed
And many a long-forgotten isle explored.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Round stedfast rock and rugged promontory,
Down silvery reaches of inviolate streams,
Past sombre heights and castles famed in story
We drifted on, allured by prosperous gleams,
The mystery of eld and wizard light of dreams.

Ballad of Lost Childhood

(Told to a child)

And a ship came out of the dark, my dear,
Out of the mist and snow,
With a glimmer of light upon its prow,
And it glided soft and slow.

It glided on so soft and slow
That open to my view
Were all the sweet and gentle sprites
That seemed to make its crew.

I gazed upon the tiny deck
And saw the captain there;
And lo, he was a little child,
And he was wondrous fair.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

His hand lay calmly on the prow
As he looked far away,
And the ship it glided slowly on
And the waves cast up their spray.

And the ship it moved so soft and slow
I thought it must be still;
But the merry winds blew out to sea,
And the ship obeyed their will.

At last it seemed a little spot,
So far it moved away,
And suddenly it vanished quite,—
Whither, none might say.

And some there are who call the ship
The Ship of Other Days
That softly comes from out the dark
And no man knows its ways.

Ballad of Lost Childhood

And others are who say it is
The ship of a little child;
His gentle hand is on the prow
And his eyes are sweet and mild.

But this I know, it is a bark
That sails an unknown sea,
And it waiteth not for any man,
And it tarried not for me.

And thought other ships there are that come
Out of the mist and snow
With a glimmer of light upon the prow
And softly pass and go,

I wait in vain for my ship's return,
My ship that went out to sea,
For it sailed away into the dark
And comes no more for me.

To a Little Girl Who Died

I saw you only once or twice,
And then I thought you very nice
Like other little girls
With curls,
In lace and fluttering strings
Of ribbons and silks and things;
But after a time I scarce recalled a trace
Of eyes or hair or any delicate grace;
I knew no more your face.

And then . . . I heard . . . you had died,
And drawing to a lonely place aside
Unseen of all,—this is a secret true
Between us two,—

To a Little Girl Who Died

In that most lonely, lonely place aside
I cried.

Now scarce do I remember any trace
Of your lost innocent face;
Yet sometimes, sometimes, when I see
A little girl such as you used to be,
Her ways, her eyes, her hair,
Or some slight thing that little children wear,—
It shakes the heart of me.

Capitulation

To that conjectured She,
Whoe'er she be,
That shall betimes my frolic fancy bind
And with the queenly custom of her kind
Prove tyranness to me;

To that consummate lass,
Own Beauty's glass,
Wherein such union of all charms will show
That which from which 'twill baffle Love to
know,
Submit I bow, alas.

Whether divinely tall,
Or færy small,

Capitulation

Standing demure with posture most descreet,
Or footing it lightly with abandon sweet,—
My heart's to her in thrall.

Whether her eyes be grey
As close of day,
Deep-smouldering dark, or sprightly glancing
blue,
Let be whate'er their love-compelling hue,
I own their starry sway.

Whether her locks be jet
Freely unlet,
Or coyly snooded brown or golden fair,
Within the entangling meshes of her hair
My destiny is set.

And though her beauty quell
With magic spell

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

The simplest utterance of my praiseful tongue,
Yet shall my heart with golden musics wrung
Of her be voluble.

And though her winsome eyes
With stark surprise
Shall rouse strange tumult in my shaken breast,
Yet peace I'll find and spiritual rest
In their tranquilities.

So, be she dark or fair,
I have no care,
Since this full well of so dim mystery
My prescient heart doth know, that being She
She's everything most rare!

Madrigal

Love is timid, Love is bold,
Love is like a tale half-told,
Love is merry, Love is sad,
Love is sober, Love is mad,
Love is young and old.

Love outstares the brightest star
When that the beloved is far,
But when the beloved is by
Love will scarce lift up an eye,
Love can only sigh.
Love will show in gravest plight
Like a holy eremite
Sworn to cause of truth;
Then like frolic youth

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Love will caper, Love will grin,
Find cause of quarrel in a pin,
Feast full early, fast full soon,
Swear great oaths to sun and moon;
But an if the true-love come
Love stands mute and dumb.
Love will laugh in any weather
With a heart as light as feather,
Love will sing a song;
Then 'twill weep for days together,—
True to nothing long.

Love, I will not be thy sport,
Love, I will beware thee;
Or, if thou wouldst snare me,
See thou act in seemlier sort;
Else I cannot bear thee;
Hence! I do forswear thee!

Love's Intendment

Were she the queen of my desires
She'd vested be in sweet attires
Of clinging virtues, fairer far
Than costliest robes of monarchs are;
She'd diadem in regal guise
Her brows with glistening charities
And, wearing on her winsome face
The mystic light of inward grace,
She'd sceptre her above the press
With sovereign wand of gentleness.

Were I the monarch of my soul
My staunchest levies I'd enroll
And with a port of firm command
Amongst mine innate powers stand

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

To bid them all my soul bedight
With noble actions, pure and bright,
And garnish with supernal art
The inmost chamber of my heart
In stateliest splendor, so to be
Fit place for her high empery.

The Stratagem

Oh, I would roam this wide world o'er
Or dare the raging sea
If so I might from Nature's store
Win ornament for thee.

But how may I strange beauties place
Where nothing is amiss
Or dower with an alien grace
What now too gracious is?

Oh, I would bow this stubborn head
Or bend a servile knee
If so I might by lowlihead
Do homage, Sweet, to thee.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

But is that reverence meet which shows
 In pale obsequious guise,
Or is that homage true which knows
 It can no otherwise?

Maiden, why with undue assault
 Dost thou my spirit oppress?
Where other ladies err by fault
 Thou sinnest by excess.

Now therefore make I bitter plaint
 And lay it to thy charge,
Haply that thou assume a taint
 And my strait scope enlarge.

But if this boon I crave of thee
 Thy unworthiness withhold,
Or thou on my necessity
 Cast negligent glance and cold,

The Stratagem

I'll deck me out in lovely gauds

From thy superfluous store

And with stol'n livery of thy lauds

Eke out my portion poor,

That so, though thou shouldst obdurate prove

To my weak charms or none,

Thou canst not choose but fall, my Love,

A captive to thine own.

Complainte D'Amour

I

I, as you know, am a writer by profession,
In fact, a poet,
And for some little time now
I have been meditating a letter to you
Complaining of a certain curious phenomenon
Of which you are the prime cause and essential
reason.

It is this:
Sometimes,
Especially just after I have seen you,—
The day, for instance, following the night on
which I have seen you,—

Complainte D'Amour

When I sit down quietly and alone
And, proposing a poem,
Wait like a taut violin string
For inspiration to come and sweep this spirit of
mine into music,
Then
Your image comes floating before my mind's eye,
And I, falling into a daze,
A sort of peculiar and wide-awake trance,
Sit idle, doing nothing at all
And caring to do nothing
Except to think of you and to gaze at this image
of you
A silent worshipper.
And frequently this condition continues for days
So that I wander about in a delightful abstraction
Heedless and scarcely conscious
Of the pulsating and feverish world around me.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

I bump into posts and people,
I bark my shins against unseen objects;
Taxi-drivers swear at me
And curse me for a loon and a simpleton,
But I merely smile and pass on,—
Somehow I seem incapable of anger.
And my friends grin
And shake their heads knowingly.
Really I suppose that I do in fact
Appear to the world a dizzard, a fool,
A ninnyhammer and one who has entirely lost
his wits;
And probably I am,
But I do not care.

.

Meanwhile not a line is written.

.

Confound you anyway!

Complainte D'Amour

II

I do not know why I love you.
You are not overly witty,
Nor clever,
Nor exceptionally beautiful.
In truth I have known many ladies more beautiful than you,
And cleverer,
And much more accomplished and intellectual.
And yet
For some abstruse and incalculable reason
You are mixed up in my most intimate concerns,
My thoughts, my plans, my visions,—
And you the most entrancing vision of all!
I find myself often thinking of certain traits of yours,
Little elusive mannerisms and characteristics,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Slight actions that hardly deserve a name
And are barely noticeable except by the eye of
love,

So minute and transitory are they.

Perhaps it is these would give me the answer:

The way you wear your hair,

The fold of your dress, your light and graceful
bearing,

Or, on occasion, the saucy flirt of your head,

Your chin tip-tilted;

Maybe it is the merry flash of your eye

Welling over with laughter,

Or that most pleasant and gracious manner you
have in speaking to one

Like some high and incomparable lady of ro-
mance

Quite simple and unassuming and at ease.

Or perhaps it is only the little mouth you some-
times make at me

Complainte D'Amour

In humorous deprecation

When I pay you a high-flown and extravagant
compliment. . . .

I do not know. . . .

It is a great mystery.

The Garden

Here are roses for your brow
And sweet berries for your eating,
Grasses where the soft winds blow,
Tranquil bowers for love's greeting;
Round about are hedges rude
That no alien foot intrude.

Peaches in the mellowing sun,
Yellow pears that ripe to bursting,
Globèd grapes with wine that run,
Pulpèd apples for your thirsting;
Choose or leave whate'er you will
They but wait your pleasure still.

The Garden

Flowers for to crown your hair,
Shaven sword for merry dances,
Fountains twinkling in the air,
Quiet pools to take your glances:
These are yours with paths to roam,
These are yours if you will come.

But if you and Love should go
Wandering by and never enter,
All the air will turn to snow
And the flowers pass to winter;
Withered fruit will hang on the wall
And this garth to ruin fall.

The Look

Your grave and sorrowful eyes,
 Clouded with sudden pain,
Forever and forever
 With me remain.

To my so thoughtless words
 This was your still reply,
Whose eloquence yet fills
 My earth and sky.

Dust I' the Mouth

Oh, who would be Love's gleeman
Must have a heart of fire
And strike a wild and passionate note
Upon a golden lyre,
Must strike a true and tender note
Unto his soul's desire.

"Gi' me one kiss o' thy comely mouth
Or a glance o' thy bonny bright e'e,"
So sang Love's minstrelsy,
Swift and wild as the winds that blow,
Passionate as the sea,
Gentle as the winds that blow,
Simple as the sea.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

I thought to be Love's gleeman
All on a harp of gold,
But oh, before I struck the strings
My heart it withered old,
For even as I touched the strings
My Love lay deaf and cold.

“And for bonny Annie Laurie
I'd lay me down and dee,”—
Is this Life's irony?
Answer, ye blustrous winds!
Reply, thou moving sea!
.
Hushed and mute the winds;
Motionless the sea.

Communion

Nothing that I might say
Or I might do, alack,
Unto the light of day
Can serve to bring her back.

Her body straight and fair
Low in the earth doth lie;
Her spirit light as air
Dwells in the windy sky.

And so I do not weep
Nor this wide silence mar;
Tears cannot go so deep
Nor any words so far.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Now I all solace waive
And make no further cry;
Mute grief may pierce the grave
And silence touch the sky.

Lost-Love Tryst

(*"The strong hours conquer us."*

*Coleridge's Translation of Schiller's
Wallenstein).*

To-night I hear the innocent winds go by

With gentle tread in meek simplicity;

To-night I see the patient stars on high

With delicate grace shed down their
glamourie;

To-night I feel the odorous warmth of flowers

Clinging about me like some dim caress;

To-night I sense the flight of hurrying hours,

Whose healing wings remove old wretchedness.

Oh winds, I charge ye, keep your tranquil ways;

Ye brooding stars, I bid ye make no stir;

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Drift, flowers, your sweetest incense round this
place—

So shall ye be Love's best remembrancer.
Only to Time I say, Move slow, move slow,
Lest in your haste you mar my shrinèd woe.

Elegy

Now thou art dead and gone, Ladie,
Now thou art dead and gone,
The sky it is not good to see
Nor earth to tread upon.

The sky it holds thy lily-white soul
And the earth thy cold body,
And till they twain shall come together
So long I'll grieve for thee;

So long I'll grieve for thee, Ladie,
So long I'll grieve for thee,
While there is earth to tread upon
And bonny skies to see.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Now fare thee well, thou springtime flower,
Breath and bloom o' the May;
Henceforth through this world's wilderness
I walk a lonely way.

The Great Refusal

To casual seeing he was just the same
That he had always been; he dressed the same
And walked and talked as he had always done,
And when he laughed the old familiar chuckle
Came in just pat as it was used to do;
So that it was no wonder bland outsiders
Thought him the man that they had always
known.

But though he made no sign and walked securely
The usual round of every-day affairs,
He was no more the man that he had been
Than I am Julius Cæsar. For when sounded
For his behoof that strange imperious call
Which, name it fate or duty, each man hears

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Lifting above the noises of the world
Once with authentic summons in his soul,—
Because it spoke to him in too stern fashion
Bidding him go the difficult way of pain
And stress and starry loneliness that leads
To the fair summit of one austere glory,
He turned aside, and therewith pulled about
him

His house of life forever. A difference slight
It might have seemed, and common: he but
chose

One path instead of another, merely took
What seemed the way of facile treading; yet
By the fine irony of the unforeseen
The path he chose became for him indeed
The difficult way of pain and loneliness
That leads to God knows whither. So he passed
With his strict doom upon him down the days,
Dogged to the end by diligent regret.

The Great Refusal

And though he spoke no word and walked securely

The usual round of every-day affairs,
Within his eyes I caught the look of one
Who bears a secret trouble at his heart;
And now I never see him but I think
Of the heroic path he might have trod
And those dim peaks of his refused greatness.

God and the Universe

Beyond the beating of Time's powerful wing
And all the solemn changes wrought thereby,
Hidden yet known, remote yet ever nigh,
Vaster than space where the great planets swing,
Higher than thought its daring point may fling,
Deeper than Faith may trust or Hell deny,
Unchanged, unchanging, through eternity
Dwells wide Creation's everlasting King.

Now in the likeness of a snow-white Dove,
Now on the gibbet rackt with cruel pains,
Now breathing Life as life and death above,
In triune majesty He lives, He reigns;
And this vast world His still unwearied love
Surrounds, uplifts, controls, preserves, sus-
tains.

The Plight

Now is this rich-proud Age brought suddenly
low,

And fearful lest it never more should rise

Like one who on a bed of fever lies

Tosses in frenzy and intemperate woe;

Ah me, it does not its right sickness know,

But vext with spectral forms and demon eyes

It raves and curses in delirious wise,

Mistaking ill for good and friend for foe;

For in that darkened chamber full a score

Of vile imposters round the couch of pain

Crowd to discuss the symptoms o'er and o'er

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

And with loud words their diverse views
maintain,

Whileas for entrance at the bolted door

The Great Physician knocks, and waits in
vain.

Saints' Gold

Whoso is faithful warden of desire
And o'er his bosom wields control complete
Hath deep within his soul a bower meet
For shadowy ease and chaunt of woodland quire;
Nay, 'tis a sacred region walled with fire,
A sanctuary pure, a calm retreat
Of healing thoughts and claustral silence
sweet,
Whence all the ills o' the seeming world retire.

But if he should his wild desires unpen
Upon this precious plot and it despoil,
The snake Remorse about his heart shall coil

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

And this fair garth become a viperous den;
For this is truth, if any truth 's to tell,
In man's own breast he bears his Heaven or
Hell.

Worldly Place

When I regard Earth's prizes and her fee
For willing service, note how small and great
Barter their honor at full easy rate
In crowded marts, and when, oh worst, I see
That many a sovereign soul, unbowed and
free—

Though victim of the World's extremest
hate—

Knows for Circean cozenage too late
The soft caress of her fell sorcery;

Then greatly I fear her touch, her glance, her
mood

Of tender dalliance, as with amorous wile
Masking her purposed ill beneath a smile

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

She winds about the soul her bare arms lewd;
For when with frowns she may not work her
will,
Fair-seeming ways she hath and gracious skill.

Enemies Three

The Soul hath two grim foemen: one in might
 Marches afield with banners and proud tread,
 The other in all cunning trickeries read
Of spies and ambush wages subtler fight.
The one the World, the other Satan hight,
 Are these fell foes that on Life's field dispread
 Marshall their forces in great lustihead
And seek to do the Soul most foul despite.

But oft there is a third more dread than they
 As having neighbor nearness to our state,—
The sometime treacherous Body that would
 betray,
Or act the craven in the fortress gate:

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Then, Soul, be wary and thy staunch powers
 know,
Since traitorous friend is worse than open foe.

Detachment

Oh for a spirit stedfast, unsubdued
To worldly villeinage, a bosom clean
Of earth's base uses, and a will serene
In sovereign strength of its own hardihood,
That so I might unto my proper good
Be constant ever and with purpose keen
Move in firm mastery through this troubled
scene
Monarch of self in full imperial mood.

Then should my soul like some sea-shattering
rock
Rising aloof from the low trodden shore

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Stand in bare grandeur 'gainst the whelming
shock

Of the world's powers and deaf to their proud
roar,

Or peaklike mount to some far virgin height
Where not ev'n eagle wing should hazard flight.

Storm

Here do I pause and watch Life's swollen main,
This desolate waste of waters dark with woe,
Heaving and tossing in tremendous throe
'Neath every passion's buffet. Wind and rain
Lash its vext waves to fury, and in vain
Seems hope of havening calm, for swift or
slow
These mighty currents with ordained flow
Move ever to the ultimate ports of Pain.

When this I see I bow in vague despair
As one who long with every wave hath striven
And knows too well how far his barque's been
driven

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

From her true course,—till comes this thought
most fair,

That once a Voice with gentle sweet behest
Said "Peace," and all the waters sank to rest.

Last Voyage

Oh, let there not be moaning and sad wail,
Oh, let there not be sighs and bitter tears
When for the shadowy region of lost years
I me prepare in Death's dark ship to sail;
For I may not that great appointment fail
Nor need I dread the angriest wave that rears,
Since Death a master mariner is and steers
The stoutest craft that ever weathered gale;
But let there be brave instruments in play
Breathing of high adventure on strange sea
And to their music let me glide away
And sweeping o'er that course of mystery
In God's vast harbor dash 'mid bursting spray
With tackle trim and streamers fluttering
free!

At Moment of Victory

*"Who never art so near to sin and shame
As when thou hast achieved some deed of name."*

—Newman, *Dream of Gerontius*.

If e'er that moment come, as come it may,
When thou, my Soul, after stubborn debate
Of armèd struggle with the hostile state
Through their close spears shalt cleave victorious
way;
Yea, when thou break their strong and cruel
array
And drive before thee like a roaring spate
Them in wild tumult, and at last elate
With conqueror's mien the hard-won field
survey:

At Moment of Victory

Even then at that high moment draw aside

And wrap thee round with silence; yea, expel
All sounds of glory and triumphant pride

And ponder this dark secret I foretell,—
That on that slippery point of time abide

Danger and loss and the swift reach of Hell.

Judgments

"Nay, an thou'lt mouth . . ."

—Hamlet.

I

Looking abroad upon this populous earth
Strange thoughts I have, harsh and embitterèd,
That turn my shining dreams to sandy dearth
And bend with care my once exalted head:
As seeing want that slinks away to die
And full-blown plenty making wild carouse,
And sodden baseness deaf to honor's cry,
And mad ambition shaking this world's house,
And raging lust acting in beastly kind,
And robed injustice dealing forth the law,

Judgments

And pompous power to trampled merit blind,
And human trust that leans upon a straw:
These but to know is the charged cup to drain
Of hate and scorn and all-embittering pain.

II

Nay, this is not one-tenth of life's sad story,
No, nor one-thousandth nor one-millioneth
part,
And here doth man was made for timeless glory
Feed myriad woes at his unquiet heart:
So see I Youth lie broken in defeat
With all its glorious purpose given to loss,
And hapless Age, bereft of generous heat,
Yet staggering on beneath Time's heavy cross,
And high endeavor striving for its goal
Through weary years and baffled at the last,
Or if it win, unto the famished soul
The fruit is ashes and the savor passed—

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

That so this world that seems so fair to view
Takes on corruption's grey and leprous hue.

III

Pride and ambition like two fiery devils

Rage in my blood and give me no release,
Bidding me spurn the swarming popular levels

Where other men win merriment and ease;
And I thereby have won a most sweet guerdon,
Oh, sweet, most sweet, as wormwood or as
gall,

And I have borne, and bear, a pleasant burden,
Crushing my spirit ere this body fall;

So when I think I might have made ambition

Tower a height all loftiest height above
And bent my pride, proud in its own submission,

Unto the deathless purposes of love,
I call myself, *thus alien to right rule,
A fool, a fool, a world-without-end fool.

Judgments

IV

If knowing my own scope and seeing clear
The stedfast object of my human days,
I weakly swerve from many a purpose dear
And walk aside in strange, o'er-darkened
ways;
If pressed by chance or fate or what-you-will
Or by the gusty humors of the blood
I do the thing my spirit marks for ill
And still forego the gracious deed I would:
How may I then impose my will abroad
Who in my native region so lack power,
Or scorn the wretch who falters 'neath his load
When I my task scarce bear from hour to
hour?
Thus do my judgments curve in middle flight
And at that place whence they were launched
alight.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

V

Shall I be proud if these my days are fair
 With wealth's full honors, blazed to envy's
 eye?

Shall I bemoan my outcast state and bare
 That walks abroad in shivering penury?
Shall I rejoice because I am the theme
 Of Glory's trump, which wide my fame doth
 blow?

Or shall I mourn for that I nothing seem
 Save food for slanderous tongues? Not so!
 not so!

Since neither want nor riches, palace nor den,
 Nor praise nor scorn, nor love nor rancorous
 hate,

Nor any judgment on the lips of men
 Can add to my true quality, nor abate:
What thing I am, I am—no more, no less,
Than that which God shall find to ban or bless.

Sursum Corda

When in the midst of this embattled field
 Compassed with terrors and the angry foe
 For very stress I may no farther go
But only stand and hold my battered shield,
And when, alas, in this weak state revealed
 My recreant powers in craven sort do show,
 Refusing that right aid to me they owe,
And sick at heart I am on point to yield:

Oh, then if I but think on deeds long past
 Of Saints and Heroes who achieved and bore,
Who on the perilous edge of fate stood fast
 Nor blenched nor quailed the sternest doom
 before,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Then stirs my heart as with a trumpet-blast:

Once more unto the breach, my Soul, once
more!

QUEST AND HAVEN

(In Memory of Francis Thompson)

I

Quest

(On first hearing of Francis Thompson)

Mayhap I seek thee. All the forespent years
Haply I traversed, waiting thy lone voice,
A voice as of far mysteries and tears
And tremulous beauty, making to rejoice
The thrallèd spirit. Yea, perchance 'twas thou
I ever followed, groping out the road—
With doubtful eyes and heavy heart enow—
That ledest upward to Fame's right abode
Of still, inviolate glory. I know not:
This only do I know—with reverent breath
Song's crownèd monarchs ever have I sought;

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

This only do I see—Beauty hath wrought
Strange transformation in this house of death.
Nor yet may I believe what my heart saith
Thro' weary ways who wander, far and nigh
Seeking one latest singer making bloom
Life's barren spaces and uplifting high
From out this welter of encumbering gloom
A dauntless forehead and a seeing eye.

Ah me, an eye for Beauty, whose strong spirit
Yet walks among us in our hopeless night,
Flooding this prison-house that we inherit
With billowy radiance of all pure delight;
Who doth with lovely largess much endower
Stream, field, and woodland, and o'er-bending
skies;

Whose voice is as the sound of vernal shower—
Beauty that walks the earth and never dies!
Nor these alone—the hues of morn and even,

Quest

The luminous raiment of the dewy air,
Not sole the visible shows of earth and heaven
The living tokens of her bounty wear—
Not these alone, but Love's divinest treasure,
All viewless glories of this mortal plan,
All joy that sways the heart with kindly pleasure,
All peace that calms the fevered soul of man,
Draw vital breath from that serenest Power,
Whose splendor is the star, whose fragrance is
the flower.

Beauty and Song—how in this waste of days
Have we unlearnt their praise;
Turned dullard eyes, blinded to all delight,
From those pure spirits and bright,
And now with cheerless steps tread dark and
miry ways!
All reverent use has failed us: now no more
Will we the stars adore;

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

To sealèd ears
Rings the large music of the circling spheres,
Nor any breast responsive. The threne o' the
 sea.

Is but reminder that we once were free
And chaunts our dissolution. Yea, amiss
We take the innocent kiss
Of the young winds of heaven; with stolid stare
Front the blithe face of Nature; tho' she bare
Her lucid charms in fluent disarray
Unto the eager day,
Nathless the maiden freshness of her smile
May nothing us beguile.
Whether Dawn lave
Her rosy bosom in the eastern wave,
Or Night with his glittering train
Move in slow grandeur thro' his dusk demesne,
For us, for us they are no longer fair;—
Our hearts are elsewhere.

Quest

Tho' Beauty linger, spokesman hath she none
In this ill day save these, save these alone:
Vague winds the trees among,
Soft speech of rain, brisk waters,—the brute
 voice
Of Nature, dumb interpreter,—blank noise,
An inarticulate murmur, which not man
Untaught of Song, own Beauty's proper tongue,
May rightly spell or her true features scan.
Untaught of Song—Oh, how may Song remain
In this most bleak and desolate hold of pain,
Or to her eyes allow
Stern sight of wrongs her heart may not sustain?
This is the term of her allotted stay,
For now, even now,
She, the wild she,
Slipping her fragrant coverture, away
Quivers aloft to heavenly regions free
In one swift burst of starry ecstasy!

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

A fleeting loveliness, a shadowy blissful sound,
Brave Song hath vanished, far away hath fled,
While we with bosoms cold and senses dead
Not mourn our loss. In sordid shackles bound,
Lashed with the stinging scourge of physical
 need,
We move in the treadmill of the world's cold
 greed,
And no man his own master. Life, alas,
Outspread for the spacious field of man's free
 act,
Is now a meted circuit, a fixed pace,
A prison-yard and bondage.
Nay, 'tis a scheme mechanical, a base
Contrivance of craft, and man a whirring fact
Therein unspiritual. Wheel within wheel
And cog to cog adjust,
With many a smoothly-oiled groove between,
Grinding man's spirit to unvalued dust

Quest

Revolves the monstrous engine, this accurst
machine,
Till the heart sicken and the faint sense reel.

We know not and we care not; we have passed
Into the valley of all glooms, where rears
Doubt his gaunt shadow, and behind us cast
Belief and hope, laughter and cleansing tears.
We have shook off the yoke of the worshipping
years.

“No more,” (we said),
“Will we bow down to the intolerant dead
Who are beyond the scope of their lost seeing.
Here on this plot of isolated being,
Untouched of mystery and unnatural dread,
We disavow all reverence and all fears,
All vain ancestral pieties, all dreams.
Faith is a fool’s delusion, a madman’s jest,
A self-wrought snare of fevered fantasy,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

And we, proud we,
Proclaim the passing of a stricken day
Of dupes and cowards, fed with windy schemes
Of a surmised hereafter.
Away! away!
Here where we nothing know and nothing can
Beyond the limits of this mortal span,
Come what, come may,
Here we unchain our spirits of old sway;
Scatter the dust-heap of all ancient lies
And musty fables;
Make mockery of knee-worship and fling down
Altar and emblem. With one magnificent sweep
We have dashed the lights o' the sky, extin-
guished quite
To be lit no more forever. Henceforth we keep
No law not human, in resolute despite
Of god or devil. Yea, tho' wide heaven frown
And cast its thunders on our helpless heads,

Quest

To this we stand against what gods may be:
We will no longer serve; we will be free!"

Wild vaunt of madness! Even unto the leas
We have drained the poisonous philtre, the full
cup

Of mingled skepsis and dark blasphemies,
Whose lethal taste we reckon not. . . .
Yet I, even I, (dim watcher in the ways
Whereon unfolds the pageant of the days,
Torched by the flaming ministry of the sun
Unto Death's narrow house and close embrace),
From out the darkness that no man may shun,
From forth the patient silence of the grave,
Here have I sealed and won
Knowledge and peace to succor and to save:
Man lives by affirmation; must cast out
The withering spectre of cold-peering Doubt!
Ay,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Must forever deny
Denial, and with courageous breath
Gi' the lie to lying Death!
For only so
Is his frail being assured, and that one home
Whereto 'mid welcoming smiles he at the last
shall come!

Mayhap I sought thee all the forespent years,
Haply I wait thee in this nook of days;
How may I know within this mist of tears,
Or pierce to sight beyond this mortal haze?

No voice responds; the night hath fast descended;
I scarce may see whereto my path is set.
I walk alone; my Spring of Youth is ended,
Whose passing is high sorrow and regret.

Quest

And yet, and yet—

What is this thing, to me that Rumor sayeth
Of Song and her true-lover? What bright tale
Entreats her casual utterance as she strayeth,
And casts vague splendor on Time's muffling
veil?

Of thee, of thee she tells! but ah, what change
Hath wrought this music in the floating air?
It is a lustrous presence wondrous strange,
It is a magic portent wondrous fair!

Of thee, of thee she tells! Not as of old
With chattering lips to cheat the general air,
But moulding to truth her vehement speech and
bold

She comes in solemn loveliness austere,
As when upon the hush and dark of night,
What time the gracious heavens mantled be

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

In cloudy pall of unpermitted light,
With maiden grace amid her bright mine
Steps forth the sudden moon in stainless
majesty!

Of thee, of thee she tells! nor doubt I may
The simple tidings of that voice serene,
For ah, she hath foresworn her garrulous way
And speaks to other purpose now, I ween.
Stately she paces forth as any queen
In that grave beauty she had not whilere;
Surely she hath become what now she seems—
A holy goddess innocently fair
With round her brow the play of starry gleams
And in her eyes the light of immemorial dreams!

She has past! she has gone! And now thro' the
dusk I hear
Faintly a far sound drifting silvery fine,

Quest

Which tho' it distant be yet wavers near,
Which tho' it mortal prove yet seems divine!

With straining sense I listen, but in vain;
With patient ear I hearken, but too late;
That voice is silent, still that magic strain.
But I who know the authentic prelude great
Expectant stand and 'count my patient gain:

Here with strange longing at the destined gate,
Although I hear thee not, I wait, I wait.

II

Haven

Bursts thy full voice about me like the sea!
Swells its wide music like the ocean strong,
With might impetuous of imperial Song
Crashing upon the rocks of destiny!
But ah, not jocundly
Under the spanning arch of shaded heaven
Sweep those drawn tides of Song's resistless
power,
For lo, this is the hour
Of Storm, and like a sea storm-driven,
Smitten with tempest, lashed with the sounding
gale,
And all harmonious sea-winds turned to bitter
wail,

Haven

Song comes, with giant strides uneven
Staggering beneath the weight of this world's
 woe,
With shaggy front storm-furrowed, tempest-
 riven,
Reeling in anguish and tremendous throe,
And on the iron shores of mortal day
Shatters its golden music in swift-showering
 spray!

The skies grow dark; the angry storm-clouds
 lower
From verge to verge of the horizon's rim,
And wrapped in mist's ethereal vesture dim
Storm walks the waves in majesty and power:
He holds in leash his strong-necked winds which
 slowly
Advance before his shadowy form of wrath;
They but await the sign when loosèd wholly

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

They shall rush howling down their foamy path,
With vast unheaval of an ocean stirred,
A spreading wake of throbbing anguish heard.
Genius of Song, genius of Storm,—ah me,
What fearful law do these moved waters keep?
Whence is the measure, whose the stern decree,
By which these tides of mighty passion sweep
Onward to ruin and sore agony?
No voice replies save voice of one doth weep;
The heavens lower apace, and Night is on the
deep.

Night on the waters, Night o'er the ocean
spread—

Oh, that long Night of bitterness and woe!
Of draining ebb, but ah, not vital flow,
Night with his pompous step most slow, most
slow,

When cloaked in cloud the pallid stars adread

Haven

Did veil their gloryhead,
Leaving thee, their true-lover, sore to mourn,
Alone, alone, and all uncomforted!
Oh most forlorn,
Whither for peace, to what true friend shalt
turn?

Alas, all hope is silenced now and dead,
Nor lamp of solace in that gloom may burn.
For still the beat of waters on the shore,
And still the sombre plaint of vanquished day,
And now resounds the din of greater fray
Where Storm contends with Darkness; his fierce
roar

Of gathering fury goeth him before,
As forth he strides in warlike full array
To see who him would baffle of his chosen prey.

Now well the stars with pall of clouds o'er-
spread

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

May veil their gloryhead,
Leaving thee lone and all uncomforted,—
Alone, alone save for those portents dire
Which trail the skies with streaks of quivering
fire.

Yea, down the heavens with infuriate might
Rattle the shafted lightnings crooked and bright,
And the broad Storm with firmamental shock
Doth make from shore to shore this sea to rock:
Trampled under
Beneath the flying hoofs of the hurrying thunder,
Whirled to grey gulfs of pain and overcast
By the harsh buffet of the pitiless blast,
Until this shaken sea
Lapse to the pulsing rhythm of mere agony.

Oh, where is peace for this most tortured spirit?
If need may of thee merit,
Be gracious now, great mother! goddess! Earth!

Haven

Awhile be tender ; now, oh now reveal
Thy heart maternal in this grievous dearth
Of visible comfort : hasten thou and heal !
Or ye, sublime and intellectual Powers
Of man's wide-ranging spirit, make reply
To Sorrow's question ere the breathing hours
Flash on to darkness and ye droop and die :
Yea, thou, rapt seer of abstrusest lore,
Grave midnight porer on blind mystery,
Accepted heir of old Philosophy,
Sage Science, now I thee implore,
Thee I invoke from forth thy secret cell
With rite of Song and Beauty's wizard spell :
Lay me this tempest by thy potent wand ;
Over its turbulent might assert command ;
Make it to bow its head of sovereign awe
Beneath the yoke of thine assurèd law ;
Or if not so
Thou may'st its passionate mastery bring low,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Then tell, oh tell,
What inappeasable longings at its heart that
 dwell!
Oh most forlorn,
To what true friend, whither for peace shalt
 turn,
Or slake thy thirst at what blithe prophecies?
Not these, not these,
That strict importunate craving may appease,
Nor rightly say
What more-than-mortal hunger gnaws this heart
 of clay.
Ah, well thou knewest its worth
Who did'st this braggart earth
Spurn;
Yea, the tossed 'scud of Song's fleet currents on,
Like a bubble of foam, hither and yon,
Hurled
This hollow world!

Haven

Oh most forlorn,
Night on the waters, Night on the bleakening
 wave,

Oh that long Night of bitterness and woe,
Saddened with sighing of all winds that blow,
Frighted with clamor of all winds that rave;
And yet, oh brave,
Heaving in anguish and tumultuous throe
Thro' this so cheerless Night most slow, most
 slow,

Yet, yet this laboring sea
'Neath heaven's obscurèd arch surges uncon-
 querably!

Ever Night fleeth with rent banners flying
Before the onslaught of victorious Day;
Ever Storm passes with harsh moan and sighing
To some far cavern of his blustrous sway;
Nor may they, each from other, aidance borrow;

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Swift is the going of that dolorous twain—
Night which is shadow of all death and sorrow,
Storm which is breath of agony and pain:
Thus runs the rumor of their overthrow,
That grievous pair that caused such grievous
 woe,
And lo,
While yet with fitful stir the wavering sea
Startles convulsively
In dull remembrance of that conflict dire,
What is this moving shape of starry gleam,
What is this glowing phantom of desire,
That thro' the gossamer curtain of the mist,
Sun-kist,
Shimmering with splendors of Auroral fire,
Floats lightly onward like a thing of dream?
None other doth it seem
Than some far-wandering barque of Faëryland,
 I deem!

Haven

Softly as light that doth the East awaken,
Gently as swans that o'er still waters glide,
Onward it comes with silken sails outshaken
And fleecy foam along its charmed side;
And therewithal are sounds of gracious seeming,
A delicate chime of musics softly blent,
And one fair voice in thrall of lovely dreaming
Weaving bright songs of Heavenly languish-
ment.

Then wide

The swaying curtains of the mist divide;
The azure waters sparkling in the sun
Before that magic vessel flash and run
As forth it swings upon the swelling tide.
Ah, surely, surely, this none other is
Than some stray barque of Faëryland, I wis;
And yet from that high glory-smitten prow
Gazes what spirit with so human brow,
And by her side

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Oh who those seeming children passing fair
With aureole of sun-light round their flowing
hair?

A light there seemed to drape that gentle being
In silvery fluence of obscuring haze,
Mantling her grace to all but purest seeing,
Masking her form to all but cleansèd gaze;
And yet that light did not invest her wholly,
Nor dim the prompting of some hid distress,
Which to her glance that erst seemed spirit
solely

Now lent a glow of brooding tenderness.
Turned then that maiden pair wide questioning
eyes

In childish vague surmise;
But as o'er blurring sward
Come twilight shadows and go,
Even so, even so,

Haven

Flitted the trouble of their frank regard.
They looked, and saw not in their ignorant years,
A little while, a little while yet barred
From tryst of sorrow and the wooing of tears.
A little while, a little while unbent
'Neath mortal dreariment,
How could they tell the quality of woe,
Whose might they scanty guess, nor his stern
 uses know?

There is a privacy of brick and stone,
Silence substantial, massy solitude,
Material immurement, where alone
Impalpable thought its presence may intrude:
This is the figure and dark prophecy
Of what hath been and what shall be—
Spiritual isolation,
The soul's desolation,
When man doth walk that waste, austerest region,

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

(Most silent and strange, most strange and terrible),

Of utter and heart-quelling loneliness,—
Slow agony that feeds upon the bosom,
A pained void, a numb and hollow ache,
Freezing the genial pulses of the blood
To sluggish act, than death less pitiful,
Of all ordeals the bitterest and most dire,
Ultimate touch-stone of th' aspiring spirit,
The last and searchingest test, sharp proof of all,
Which drenched with bloody sweat the body of
Christ,

Ay, even Him, prone in Gethsemane—
Forsaken of God!

Mysterious tract and bare, which still have trod
The high saints duly, and from that fiery plight
Been rapt to the dizziest pinnacle of delight!
But ah, we know, we know,
Shall little feet that awful path not go;

Haven

And so

'Gainst powers of Ill anoint and Heavenly
harms

By innocency's charms,

They may not tell

Thy grief unutterable.

But she,

Even in the crash and tumult of the sea

Who heareth the breathing of one harmony,

Ah, she doth know the rhythmic law expressed,

Linking the gamut of all things that be,

That bitter follows sweet, and peace unrest,

And infant Joy doth nourish at grey Sorrow's
breast.

Oh, this she knoweth and she knoweth well

Who in the white circle of this mystic spell

Riding aloft the salt waves of the flood

Now feels the stress of saddest solitude.

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

Then drew she those two children gently to her,
And tho' they closely view her,
Ah me, she turned her wistful gaze aside
Far, far away to where the mists divide.
The simple waters flash again i' the sun,
Before that magic vessel leap and run,
As forth it swings upon the swelling tide.
There was a sound of music very dim;
Softly it passed and dropped below the horizon's
rim.

Take up thy chaunt, O sea,
For now again the trouble of storm's descended;
Thy little calm is ended,
And fled away is that bright company.
Yea, comes again the whirlwind and the stowre,
Black Night and raging tides and whelming
gloom,
And bulking dark the grim inexorable Power

Haven

Shaking his wrathful hand with threatening
doom.

Ah me, has struck the inevitable hour!
And yet I hear above the tempest's roar
The sweeping surge of this sore-vexèd sea
Chaunting forevermore,
Chaunting unconquerably,
Victory! victory!

No more! no more! The capable deed is past
Here in the perfect seeing of God's eyes,
The capable deed, the absolute, the last,
The consummation and the sacrifice,
The glory and the victory and the prize!
Yea, 'tis at hand, the appointed moment sweet
Of joy, of joy complete,
When all the waters soothed with breath of balm
Grow sudden calm
For the smooth treading of Christ's passing feet;

Shining Fields and Dark Towers

When all the winds that own none other will
Forego their purposed ill,
For "Peace, be calm," He saith—and winds and
waves are still.

A silence spreads around me solemn and vast,
The winds are mute, the streams, the sea, the
sky,
A brooding wonder o'er the earth is cast,
And I am one with her tranquillity.
Yea, all my being to great Nature thrills,
I feel upon me her assuasive hand;
Incorporate with her rocks, her trees, her hills,
With quiet blood in quietness I stand.
With hushèd breath, as still as any stone,
Watching her purpose to fulfilment draw,
Here as I stand in silence and alone,
Here in the center of her peace and awe,

Haven

Solemn and full and clear
From out the deeps of mine own soul I hear,
Yea, from the center of all peace and awe,
The voice o' the Law:
Through pain, defeat, and most outrageous
 wrong
Alone is man made strong;
And ever the way of Sorrow shall be the way
 of Song!

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